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AUTHOR Mwasha, A. Z.
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ABSTRACT

This essay reviews the major issues which must be addressed in the planning of village libraries to support development activities and adult education programs in the rural areas of Tanzania. The importance of the development of such libraries is discussed in light of the Tanzanian government's policies concerning the role of library services in national development. The individual aspects of planning for such libraries are then reviewed, including the formulation of library objectives, the construction of appropriate physical facilities, the selection of reading and audiovisual materials useful to the population served by the library, the effective staffing of the library, financial support for library services, and publicity for library programs. A 12-item reference list accompanies the text. (JL)

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SOME CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE PLANNING OF VILLAGE LIBRARIES IN TANZANIA

by

A.Z. Mwasha

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SOME CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE PLANNING OF VILLAGE LIBRARIES IN TANZANIA

INTRODUCTION:

The drive to write a paper on the planning of village libraries in Tanzania has been inspired by two main factors. First, ever since Tanzania achieved independence in 1961, a strong urge has been exerted in the development of the rural sector. This urge has several times been emphasized by the President of the United Republic of Tanzania, Mwalimu Julius Kambarage Nyerere. For instance, in 1961, he said:

> "While other countries aim to reach the moon, we must aim, for the time being, at any rate, to reach the villages"(1)

The same urge was intensified in 1967, when the then ruling Party, the Tanganyika African National Union (TANU), produced a manifesto for greater commitment to socialism, self-reliance and rural development. (2) Essentially, this Manifesto implied a new strategy for development, relying mainly on, and aimining to mobilize the country's own resources.

In September 1967, the President issued a policy paper entitled, "Socialism and Rural Development". In this paper, the President called for the establishment of Ujamaa Villages, "Communal Villages" in which people lived to-gether and worked to-gether for the good of all. This paper analyses the meaning of socialism for the rural areas of Tanzania and changes required to transform the rural economy. (3)

Following the above policy, the government and her Agencies have made various efforts to transeform the rural sector. These efforts have not achieved much due partly to lack of constant flow of information in the rural areas. To rectify this situation, a network of properly structured libraries are needed in the villages where information for small-scale industries; for handicrafts; for agriculture and for individual development and recreation will be made available. Such information for the time being does not reach the villages.

The second factor which has called for this paper is the added importance the government has given to adult education programmes. In a newly independent country like Tanzania, it is necessary that adult education is given special attention. This is partly because

of the limited educational opportunities adults had during their youths, and partly because school knowledge becomes rapidly outdated. Therefore, in post-independent Tanzania, great emphasis has been placed in the promotion of education both formal and informal. This trend is clearly indicated in the development plans of the country. In the post independence three year development plan, 1961-1964, emphasis was placed on the expansion of primary and secondary education. And in the First Five Year Development plan, 1964-1969, emphasis was placed on the provision of higher education in order to get manpower needed for the economic development of the country. In the second Five Year Development plan, 1969-1974, it was pointed out that in addition to maintaining a high quality of primary education, efforts should be made to wipe out illiteracy by 1975. (4)

Since the second Five Year Development plan was launched, efforts have been made to wipe out illiteracy in the country. It is estimated that since 1970 about 75% of those who were illiterate can now read and write. This is no doubt the target of the government pronouncement. But it is a great accomplishment if it is considered in relation with the problems associated with adult education programmes. The government is however determined to intensify adult education campaigns until illiteracy is completely wiped out in Tanzania.

It is now the duty of the Library Authority to build upon the achievement which the government has made. This can be made by making available reading materials in the rural areas to prevent newly literates from falling back into illiteracy and to provide reading opportunities for primary school leavers and others in the villages and to educate themselves continuously. This step is particularly necessary in Tanzania. For it has been noted that in the villages, there are no public reading materials such as boards carrying advertisements, street names, newspapers or even written announcements of village activities. One writer has in fact described one of the districts in Tanzania as "a jail of disliked workers" (5) mainly because of lack of educational facilities.

At this juncture, it is appropriate to introduce some of the aspects which have to be considered in the planning of village libraries. Some of these aspects are objectives; premises; materials; staffing; finance; and publicity campaigns. These aspects are discussed in this paper in the order listed here.

A/ OBJECTIVES: In considering the planning of any new service, it is advisable at the outset to indicate the purpose, functions or objectives of the service. It is advisable because, in the first place it has been discovered by the management experts that leaving the objectives undefined may lead to the loss of perspective. (6) Secondly in regard to the village libraries in Tanzania, it has been noted that the service provided now is more sporadic than systematic. This state of affairs will not, in the near future, spread the government policy for the transformation of the rural sector. Lastly, the discussion of the objectives and an indication how they are to be implemented will give a true picture of the library service required in the villages. These objectives as formulated in this paper are discussed below:

The first objective of the village libraries in Tanzania should be to develop the people's interest in reading and appreciation of books and library services;

In a survey (7) conducted in Tanzania in 1976, it was discovered that very few Tanzanians read books or newspapers. The majority of our people do not have reading habits. Too often in Tanzania, a person who sits down to read a book or a newspaper is accused of being lazy or unsociable. Furthermore, the newly literates do not know why they should read. During the survey, those who were interviewed wanted to know the benefits they would get from reading. One person wanted specifically to know whether after reading several books he would be awarded a certificate and eventually be employed by the government. To get rid of these misconceptions and cultivate reading habits in our people, library facilities should be improved or introduced in the villages so that people may have access to reading materials.

The second objective of the village libraries in Tanzania should be to reinforce and promote adult education programmes:

The government of Tanzania is spending thousands of shillings in order to enable people to read and write. Observations have shown that no concerted efforts have been made to provide means for following up this education. People are taught to read and write but are not shown the pleasure and profit which can be obtained from exercising their reading ability. In planning our village libraries, provision should be made for adult classes to be held in the libraries. The new literates will then be immediately in touch with books they need when they finish their classes.

Secondly, it is quite likely that the organizers of adult education are not aware of the few Kiswahili books which are available for new literates. To assist these people, the library Authority could compile bibliographies of easy reading materials. These bibliographies could include a selection of appopriate adult reading materials such as periodicals, government publications and carefully selected Kiswahili titles of interest to adults. Such Bibliographies would then be made available to adult education co-ordinators.

Thirdly, the Library Authority in association with the Directorate of adult education should organize seminars/conferences for librarians and adult education co-ordinators. The essence of these functions would be to bring together these two groups for the purpose of establishing the best and economical organizational pattern through which an effective provision of educational facilities in the villages can be made.

The third objective of village libraries in Tanzania should be to provide audio-visual materials to the farmers.

Tanzania is an agricultural country. Most of those engaged in farming are illiterate. The obvious thing the Library Authority has done to contribute to the agricultural development of the country is to buy more books on agriculture. Farmers cannot read these books. In order to make direct contribution to the agricultural development of the country, village libraries should be planned in such a way that farmers can benefit from their services. This could be done in the following ways:

The Library Authority in association with the Directorate of Adult Education and Audio-visual Institute could work to-gether in preparing audio-visual materials suitable to the peasants. These materials will then be made available in the village libraries. The availability of these materials in the villages could also reinforce adult education campaigns. For instance, when a campaign commences, say, "food is life", (Chakula ni uhai), the village libraries could be used to demostrate with visual aids the lessons learned in the campaign. At the conclusion of the campaign, there could be an opportunity for continued follow-up and consolidation of visual-aid services. These follow-ups could be combined with pamphlets for those who can read.

If local-oriented audio-visual materials are made available in the villages, farmers will learn better methods of farming and adult education will have more lasting effects. However, we should not

forget that audio-visual materials are more expensive than printed media; their organization and storage is also complicated. But if it can be proved to worthwhile, these materials will provide essential information to the farmers, they should be made part of the village library materials. W. Arthur Lewis in his book, "Theory of Economic Growth", says:

> "Expenditure on bringing new knowledge to the peasant farmers is probably the most productive investment which can be made in any of the poorer developing countries." (8)

<u>The fourth objective of the village libraries in Tanzania should be to promote and reinforce the country's culture:</u>

There are misconceptions in some of the developed countries that developing countries have no culture of their own. And these misconceptions have been accepted by some people in the developing countries. In actual fact those who believe that developing countries have no cultures of their own have been brainwashed. Every country has a culture of its own. The cultures of the developing countries were destroyed by the states which colonized them. Tanzania is not an exception. Hence since Tanzania achieved independence, she has been engaged in reviving the country's culture. This culture consists of singing; dancing; story telling; sports; games; mashairi na ngonjera (kind of poetry recing); ngoma zetu; (traditional muzic); carvings; paintings; ceremonies e.g. burial, marriage rituals etc.

Most of the above cultural activities were regarded by the colonial governments as primitive. And many people were made to believe. To eradicate this misconveption, the library authority in association with the ministry of information and culture should devise ways of promoting the county's culture. This could perhaps be done in the following ways:

a) The village libraries should be designed in such a way that space is provided where individuals could take part in cultural activities.
b) The library authority through the village libraries should work closely with the local authorities concerned with cultural activities in the villages.
c) The library authority should ensure that the village libraries provide cultural information to those interested.

The integration of cultural activities with the library service could have the following effects. The brainwashed will learn to value the country's culture, and it could be a way of attracting the illiterate people to the library. On culture President Nyerere when officiating the National Central Library in December 1967 emphasized that:

> "... a public library should not be just a place where books can be borrowed. It must be a centre for much wider educational and cultural activities" (9)

<u>The last objective of the village libraries in Tanzania should be to undertake research on reading materials.</u>

The Tanzania government is determined to make every citizen literate. And the librarians are keen to provide reading materials. But their efforts have been frustrated by lack of suitable reading materials on one hand and lack of reading habits on the part of most of our people. It seems as if the agencies concerned with adult education have assumed that once a person reaches the stage of being able to read and write his educational progress as a citizen is assured. This has been proved to not the case. Many people in this country do not bother to read even if exposed to suitable literature. There is, therefore, need to find out the type of literature which our people will prefer. Such investigation could be done in the village libraries.

The interests and reading needs of the people could be gathered in the village libraries. People could be asked to state the type of reading materials which should be produced for them. The information gathered could be used to devise new techniques for producing adult literature.

I have dwelt at lenth on the objectives of village libraries. I thought it was necessary to identify the objectives first and then show how they are to be implemented. This approach is more meaningful. It has already been pointed out early that leaving the objectives undefined may lead to the loss of perspective. Having defined the objectives of the village libraries, let us now look at the aspects required in the planning of village libraries.

B/ <u>PREMISES:</u> The survey of professional literature indicates that village libraries grew not by plans but by natural course. Village libraries were established in response to local pressure, or when a building for conversion became available a village library was established. This trend was not in accordance to carefully thought out plans. (10) The results of 1976 survey (7) indicated that the establishment of village libraries are not housed in purpose built premises. They are

grafted in various buildings in the villages, e.g. in schools; community centres or even in private houses. The location of village libraries in such premises creates a lot of problems. For instance, village libraries in schools are open immediately after schools close at 4.30pm. This results into undesirable practice of children borrowing books on behalf of parents and older brothers and sisters who are at work. Worse still, during school holidays the libraries in schools are closed.

In planning the village libraries, efforts should be made to construct simple buildings for village libraries. In fact such buildings will not cost much. For they will be constructed by villagers under self-help schemes. The Library Authority will, however, provide plans. A typical village library plan will consist of a space for the bookstock, a reading room and teaching space for adult classes. Provision should also be made for games such as drafts, bao, cards etc.

The village library constructed as suggested above could be furnished with simple tables; chairs/benches; blackboard/screen and equipment for the games mentioned above. At some stages of our development, we may be forced to use some buildings in the villages. If such chances occur, they should not be ignored. Careful considerations should be given to their conversion. Efforts should be made to follow the accepted plans.

C/ READING MATERIALS:

i. Books: It has been proved that people who live with books are developed whereas those who live without books are underdeveloped. (11) In Tanzania the majority of our people live without books. And worse still, those who live with books do not benefit much for they are exposed to irrelevant books. This point can easily be appreciated if it is pointed out that most of the books in our libraries are imported from abroad. Over 50% of the Kiswahili books in print are children oriented hence unsuitable for adults. To solve this problem, the Directorate of Adult Education has produced under the all-embracing label, "TEXTS FOR ADULT EDUCATION", but some of these texts the primary school leavers find them difficult. In fact, in the 1976 survey, most of the adults confessed that they could not read the Kiswahili books in the libraries. They pointed out that the Kiswahili books available were too hard for them to follow or the prints were too small for their poor sight. Some of them complained of the lack of instructional texts. (7)

At the heart of attacking these problems is the establishment of strong publishing firms. But at present our country suffers from the problems of lack writers, editors, translators and publishing facilities. The facilities available are unco-ordinated and haphazard. They suffer from acute shortage of financial resources. To solve this problem, Tanzania Library Service should consolidate her publishing scheme. This would systematize the casual and haphazard book trade in the country. To achieve this, a national book council is needed. The functions of this council could be: (a) to pull together the resources and expertise now scattered all over the country. (b) to prepare plans for the production of suitable reading materials. (c) to devise suitable and economical distribution channels. (d) to sponsor and encourage new writers and translators. (e) to organize courses and workshops for those inerested in creative work. This council should not compete with the established publishing firms, it should guide and supplement their efforts.

The above council in association with the Directorate of Adult Education could solve the problem of shortage of reading materials by using the indigenous people. The illiterate and semi-literate people have the ability to remember things just like the educated persons. The council could use the thoughts, experiences and skills of these people to produce suitable reading materials. Undoubtedly, reading materials produced from thoughts, experiences and skills of indigenous people could be very useful to the new literates. Not only will the new literates enjoy them, but the illiterates will struggle to learn to read so that they may read for themselves the materials they have been associated to produce. Ronald Benge in his book, "Libraries and Culture Change", says:

> "Whether literacy is really an important contribution to the lives of people depends upon the materials that people read after they become literate. At least half of the literacy problem therefore is what to produce for new literates to read in the transition period while they are building up a vocabulary to the level where they can easily read and enjoy standard literature". (12)

In planning village libraries, the library authority should think seriously the ways and means of producing suitable literature for new literates and avail them in the village libraries. This endeavour will, at least, assist the government solve the problem of new literates relapsing into illiteracy.

ii. AUDIO-VISUALS: It has been pointed out earlier that Tanzania is an agricultural country. To assist the farmers to produce more, the government produces a lot of pamphlets and leaflets containing information on agricultural development. Important speeches intended for agricultural development appear in the newspapers. The literate people read the pamphlets and speeches in the newspapers. On the other hand, the majority of our farmers do not have access to this information. To make this information available to farmers, the Library Authority in association with the Directorate of Adult Education should make recordings of all important information on agriculture. These recordings should be made available in the village libraries. These recordings could be used to educate the farmers as well as motivate them to read.

D/ STAFFING: The question of staffing village libraries is one of the most difficult aspect of introducing village library services. Previous discussions have indicated that village libraries should be manned by volunteers drawn from the villages e.g. ex-primary school leavers, teachers, etc. The Tanzania experience has shown that volunteers show interest and enthusiasm during their training. But once in the field their interests and enthusiasm is completely lost. They do not care about the cleanliness of the library nor do they open the library at the specified time.

In planning our village libraries, the following points should be taken into consideration. (a) running a village library is not like teaching adult education class. The work is quite involved for untrained primary school leaver. (b) Libraries offer services at some awkward hours. Such hours require staff who are properly trained dedicated and well paid. But at this stage of our development, we cannot staff our village libraries with qualified staff. This will be uneconomical and a waste of manpower. However, in staffing our village libraries, the following steps will have to be taken into consideration.

(i) The selection of staff should be given careful consideration. At the moment the selection is done by village leaders. In future, the library authority should be actively involved in selecting staff for village libraries. This will give us a chance of getting alert and intelligent persons among the primary school leavers. (ii) Pre-selection tests should be conducted by library authority to make the selection more meaningful and impartial. Lastly the village library staff should be reasonably rewarded.

E/ FINANCIAL REQUIREMENTS: Our rural library services are part of the national library system. They are, therefore, financed by National Library Board. The main difficult in financing the rural library service is that during budgetting no funds are allocated to rural library service. When financial need for rural service arises, funds have to be requested from other sources. Such arrangement is very awkward. It is therefore, proposed that at the time of preparing estimates, rural services should be considered as a separete item, and estimated for. Every regional librarian should be asked to submit suggestions to the Director for the requirements of his rural service. The items to be estimated for should be: Bookstock; allowances; buildings; Newspapers and periodicals; Audio-visual materials; furniture and equipment; fuel and vehicle maintanence. In arriving at the actual requirements, the base should be (a) the number of village libraries in a region and those to be established in the following year (b) the number of staff running the rural service in a region. To get a correct picture of what is required in the following year, close collaboration should be maintained between those who prepare the estimates and village governments.

F/ PUBLICITY CAMPAIGNS: It will be futile to consider the planning of village libraries in Tanzania without taking into consideratior the publicity campaigns required to educate people on the importance of library services. Such campaigns are essential in order to make people realize the existence and potentialities of library services. Without proper planned publicity, efforts put in the development of village libraries will be a mere waste.

In 1976 survey (7), it was discovered that the publicity programmes used by the national library system are sporty and unsystematic. Their impact has had very little effect. If the rural library service is to have an impact on government officals and attract potential users, there is need to devise effective publicity programmes. These programmes could take the following pattern:

First, those who are involed in the rural work should be acquainted with the village people so that they can organize publicity campaigns geared to all the villagers. The village personnel should find out who are the village leaders; what do they know or think about library services. The publicity programmes should utilize the knowledge of the village people. Having devised such programmes, the village library staff should be trained to carry out intensive publicity campaigns, possibly through

door to door. Such campaigns would perhaps give a realistic picture why many adults do not like to read. It could also indicate educational materials which will appeal to rural residents.

Secondly, village libraries should be publicized to groups of people eg adult education classes, village essemblies; seminars and conferences. Such talks should, whenever, possible, be centred around library needs of respective groups. Lastly, rural library service should be publicized through radios & newspapers. Although the distribution of these media is still inequate, they should not be ignored.

In concluding this section, it should be noted that, it is quite easy to suggest means and ways of publicizing library services. However, the danger associated with publicity campaigns should not be forgotten. Any publicity campaigns require proper planning and should be geared to the resources available. Given the present library services library facilities in Tanzania it will be futile to undertake a nation-wide publicity campaigns. The publicity campaigns outlined above can be undertaken when the suggestions in this paper are implemented.

CONCLUSIONS:

This paper on "Rural Library Services" is a discussion of the aspects required in the planning of village libraries in Tanzania. The paper has shown that a number of aspects are to be considered before a formula for establishing rural library service is arrived at. In fact most of these aspects are interelated. Although most of them have been touched upon in this paper, the concluding remarks which follow are only intended to emphasize the most glaring points.

The paper has shown that the provision of rural library service in Tanzania is quite essential. Essential because the government is determined to provide educational facilities to every body. This commitment requires fair distribution of library facilities for success. Out of the school children in the villages require library facilities to continue with the work begun whilst in schools. And adult education graduates require reading materials to exercise their newly acquired skills. Hence, the planning of rural library services should involve all bodies concerned with education; social and cultural development of the country. These bodies should work to-gether so that the available resources are only committed to the agreed lines of development.

Secondly, the paper has shown that there is an acute shortage of suitable reading materials. This shortage is accompanied by lack of interest on the part of most of our people. In planning our village libraries, there is need to have a team of experts who are aware of all the factors related to book production and distribution and capable of mobilizing local resources and international co-operation. This team should not only be concerned with the production and distribution of printed matter. It should also be concerned with the possibilities of producing audio-visual materials.

While local oriented audio-visual materials have a significant role to play in the provision of rural library service, foreign audio-visual materials should not be ignored. For it is quite likely that the showing of say, films from developed countries may be a practical way of breaking down the beliefs that exists among our people that all disasters come from God. If we are all sons of God, as most of us believe, why should one part of the world suffer while the other part is living happily? Perhaps carefully selected audio-visual materials from developed countries could help our people realize that the hardships they suffer are not from God, but are due to their ignorance, superstitions and other beliefs.

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